

What is claimed is:

1. An application for enabling a client to interact with communication-center resources comprising:

5           an interactive client interface component operable by the client for posting client data and for receiving and displaying agent and interaction data from the communication center;

          a brokering component for managing client and communication center data and communication; and

10           a status monitoring and reporting component for monitoring and reporting communication center and client status;

          characterized in that a client using the user interface is enabled to access and alter communication center data, and also to initiate live interaction with the communication center.

15           2. The application of claim 1 wherein the components are distributed among computerized stations interconnected in a communication network.

20           3. The application of claim 2 wherein the communications network includes one or more of a data packet network (DPN) and a connection-oriented-switched-telephony (COST) network.

25           4. The application of claim 3 wherein the communications network further includes at least one local area network (LAN).

          5. The application of claim 3 wherein the (DPN) is the Internet network.

          6. The application of claim 1 wherein communication and transfer of status information is accomplished using a presence protocol.

7. The application of claim 6 wherein the preference presence protocol used is compatible with the IMPP-IETF RFC 2778 protocol.

5 8. The application of claim 1 wherein the client data includes one or more of personal demographic data, communication capability data, personal agenda data, and personal interest data.

10 9. The application of claim 1 wherein the communication-center data includes one or more of interaction history records, product information, order-status information, and agent-availability information.

15 10. The application of claim 1 wherein the communication center status includes one or more of number of available agents, number of calls holding, estimated hold time, and communication capability data.

11. The application of claim 9 wherein the interaction history records are categorized by product.

20 12. The application of claim 11 wherein the interaction history records are further categorized by participating agent.

13. The application of claim 9 wherein the interaction history records are date and time stamped.

25 14. The application of claim 1 wherein the communication managed by the brokering application comprises status alerts related to client and/or agent states.

15. The application of claim 14 wherein the communication managed by the brokering application further comprises invitation messages sent by either agents or clients for initiating communication.

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16. The application of claim 1 wherein, in initiating live interaction, the client is enabled to select a medium and initiate a communication with the communication center using the selected medium.

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17. A customer-interaction system for enabling a client of a communication center to interact with communication-center resources comprising:

a customer interaction server coupled to the communication center;

a network-capable appliance coupled to the interaction server;

at least one agent workstation in the communication center; and

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an application for enabling a client to interact with communication-center resources, the application having an interactive client interface component operable by the client for posting client data and for receiving and displaying agent and interaction data from the communication center, a brokering component for managing client and communication center data and communication, and a status monitoring and reporting component for monitoring and reporting communication center and client status;

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the system characterized in that a client using the user interface is enabled to access and alter communication center data, and also to initiate live interaction with the communication center.

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18. The system of claim 17 wherein the components are distributed among computerized stations interconnected in a communication network.

19. The system of claim 18 wherein the communications network includes one or more of a data packet network (DPN) and a connection-oriented-switched-telephony (COST) network.

5      20. The system of claim 19 wherein the communications network further includes at least one local area network (LAN).

21. The system of claim 19 wherein the (DPN) is the Internet network.

10      22. The system of claim 17 wherein communication and transfer of status information is accomplished using a presence protocol.

23. The system of claim 22 wherein the preference presence protocol used is compatible with the IMPP-IETF RFC 2778 protocol.

15      24. The system of claim 17 wherein the client data includes one or more of personal demographic data, communication capability data, personal agenda data, and personal interest data.

20      25. The system of claim 17 wherein the communication-center data includes one or more of interaction history records, product information, order-status information, and agent-availability information.

25      26. The system of claim 17 wherein the communication center status includes one or more of number of available agents, number of calls holding, estimated hold time, and communication capability data.

27. The system of claim 25 wherein the interaction history records are

categorized by product.

28. The system of claim 27 wherein the interaction history records are further categorized by participating agent.

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29. The system of claim 25 wherein the interaction history records are date and time stamped.

30. The system of claim 17 wherein the communication managed by the brokering application comprises status alerts related to client and/or agent states.

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31. The system of claim 30 wherein the communication managed by the brokering application further comprises invitation messages sent by either agents or clients for initiating communication.

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32. The application of claim 17 wherein, in initiating live interaction, the client is enabled to select a medium and initiate a communication with the communication center using the selected medium.

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